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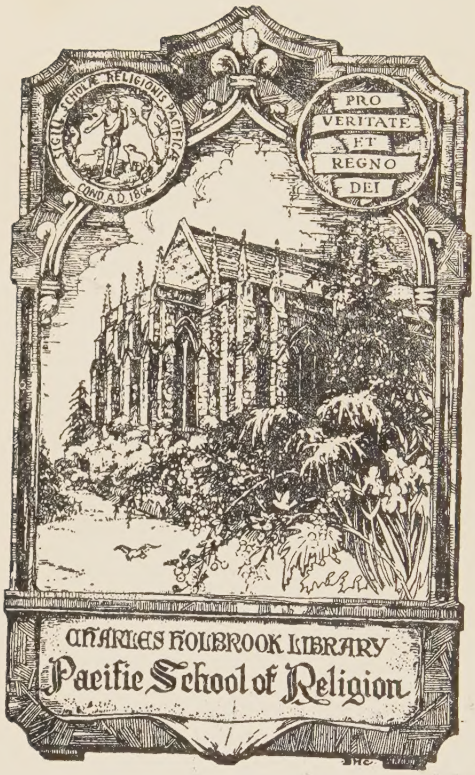
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THE ORIGIN OF THE CULT OF HERMES

BY

J. RENDEL HARRIS

M.A., LITT.D., D.THEOL., F.B.A., ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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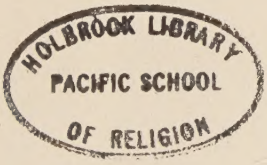

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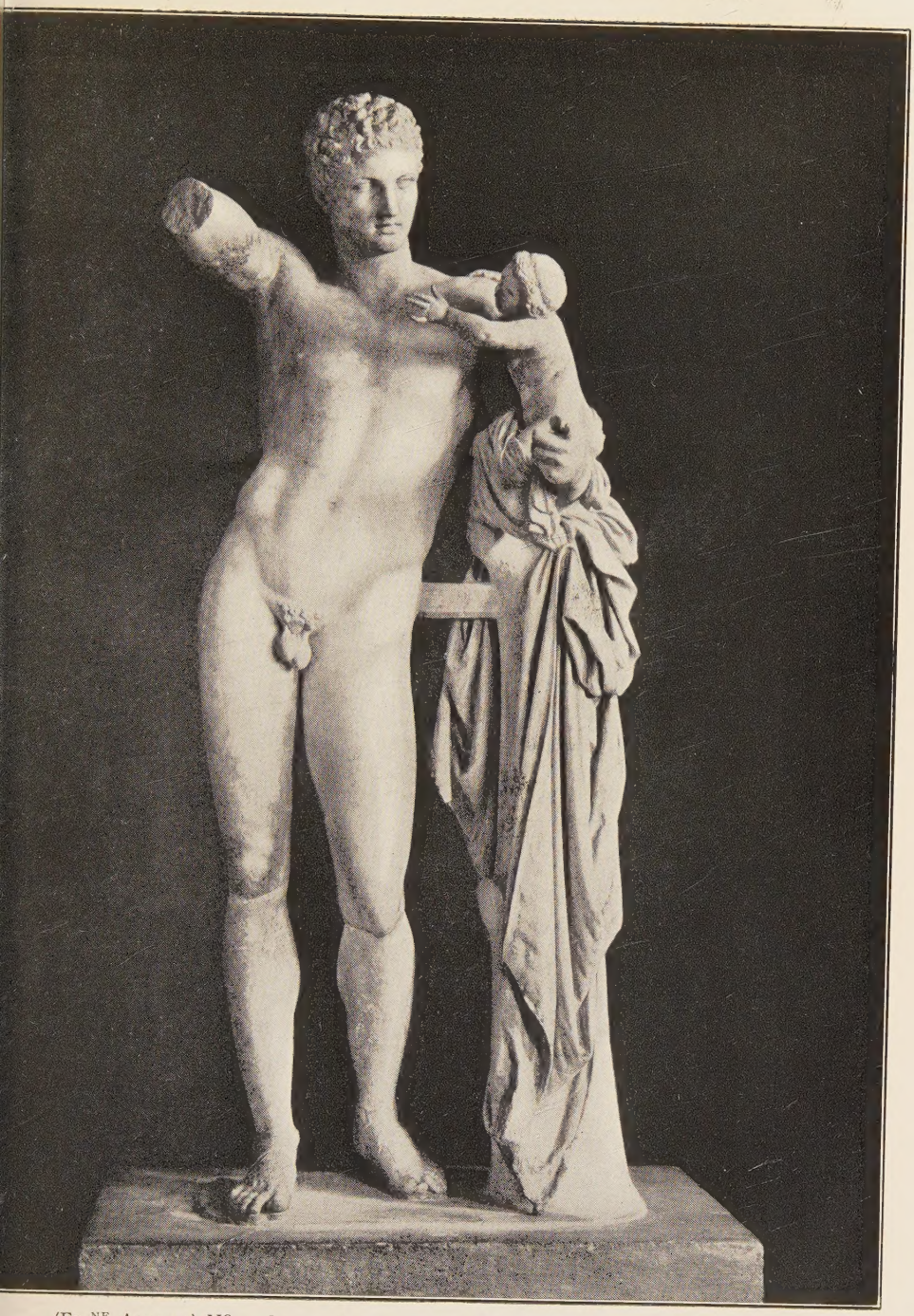

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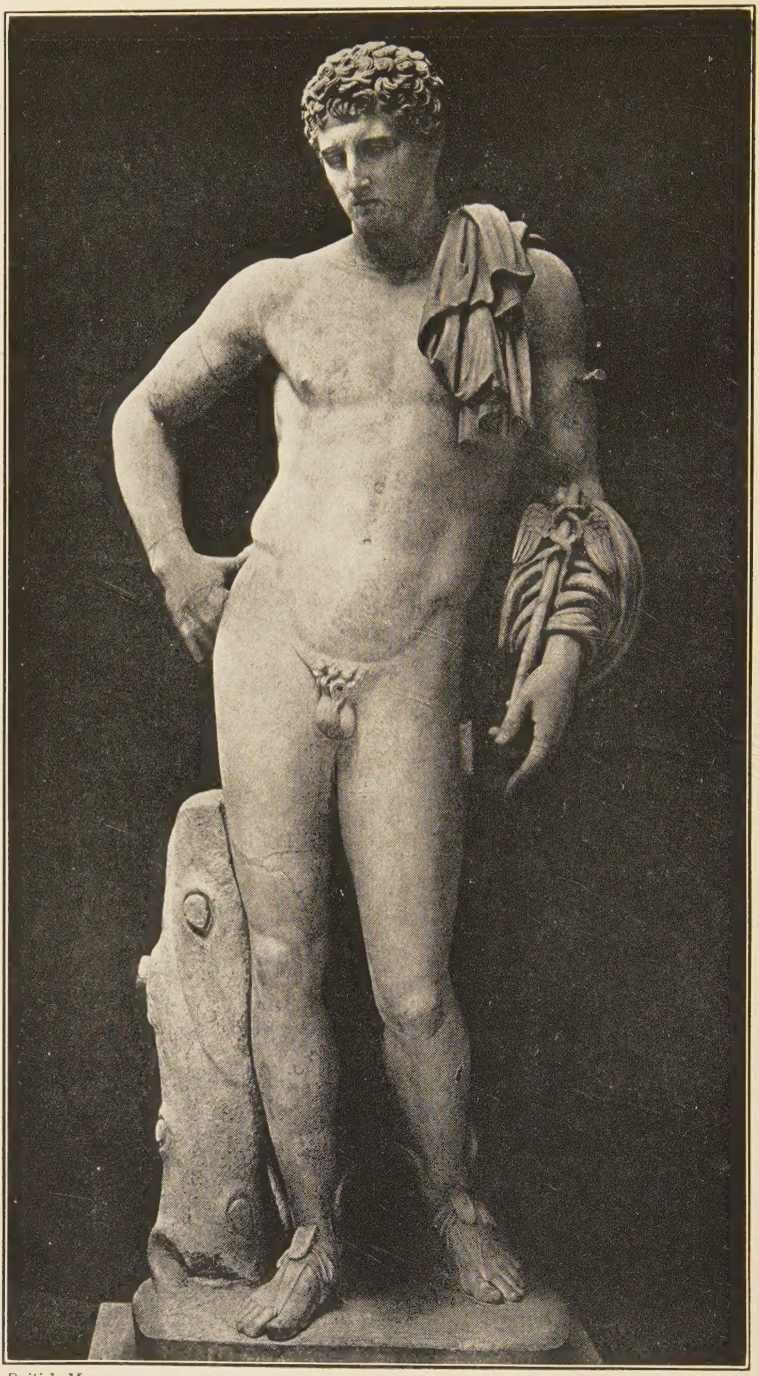

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FARNESE HERMES

THE ORIGIN OF THE CULT OF HERMES.

BY J. RENDEL HARRIS, M.A., LITT.D., D.THEOL., F.B.A., ETC.

IT was in the years 1915 and 1916 that I made my first serious invasion into the region of classical mythology by an attempt to trace the origin of the cults of the four Olympian deities, Dionysos, Apollo, Artemis and Aphrodite. These four essays, which appeared successively in the BULLETIN OF THE JOHN RYLANDS LIBRARY, were afterwards incorporated into a single volume under the humorous title of the *Ascent of Olympus by Rendel Harris*. It is difficult to realise that already twelve years of thin-spun life have gone by without further expansion of these Olympian themes, and it may very well seem to some persons that my mountaineering days are over, and that for me the Alpine Club has no further attractions or possibilities. This is, however, not to be assumed; for every one who has the climbing instinct knows that there always lurks in the breast of the mountaineer the thought of some other peak, not yet dominated by himself nor, as far as he knows, by another member of the Club. Is the whole range that we call Olympus exhausted? Are there any more gods or goddesses to whom we may assign a vegetable origin, as a partial or complete explanation of their services to man and their consequent places in a religious system? If Zeus is from one point an Oak-tree with a Woodpecker ensconced in it, if Dionysos is an Ivy-Vine, Apollo an Apple, Artemis the Mugwort, and Aphrodite a Mandrake, what are we to say of Hermes? Well, the first thing to be said is that he is the most inexplicable piece of mischief in all Olympus. One does not need to have a prepossession for vegetable origins of gods great or little, in order to say that his personality is elusive; for every dictionary of classical antiquities says the same thing; every exponent of mythology admits it. As far as interpretations go, he is a very Proteus, a magician one moment, a thief the next, a personal conductor of souls, a public orator, an exponent of philosophy, an Olympian nurse and

maid-of-all-work and messenger boy. Who can combine these functions and trace them to a common origin? Let us admit at once the perplexity of the problem, and see if, in any direction, it allows of unravelling.

For instance, the philosopher whose coat Hermes borrows is clearly an afterthought, a late development arising out of an identification of Hermes with Thoth the Egyptian god of wisdom, perhaps suggested in the first instance because Thoth is an Egyptian guide of souls. It is not to be denied that there may be Egyptian elements in Olympian legends, but this conjunction of Thoth and Hermes was as ill-advised as it was late.[1] If there were any grounds for supposing that Hermes was an immigrant from the South, we might look more closely at the equation, but as he is almost certainly a home-product of Hellas or has come into Hellas along with other hyperborean migrations, we need not spend time in looking to the Hermetic philosophy for an indication of origin. So much was clear at the start; all the rest appears to be obscure. If we look in Roscher's *Mythologie* we shall find an attempt to prove that Hermes is a wind-god, or is even the wind itself, if we go behind nature deified into *Natura Naturans*. For, if he is Wind, we can explain remotely his connection with Zeus the Thunder-god, and why he is always in a hurry to do things that he is told to do, and why his feet are winged; is there not a Sanscrit root *sar* which means *to hurry*, and will not this supply, by appropriate mutations known to philologers, the first half of the name of Hermes? Fick says so, and one does not reject Fick's solutions hastily, having no good philological sandals to fly with to a better solution. One can only say that it is a very far-fetched or far-flown explanation. Is the wind always in a hurry?

Turning to the general Hermetic problem, it will probably be wise, at least at first, not to assume a single origin for all the various forms presented by the cult. Hermes may be a fusion of characters, two or three single deities rolled into one. Even on the high stage of Olympus one man may in his time (or in his eternity) play many parts.

[1] The nearest thing that I know to an equation between Thoth and Hermes is the fact that he holds, in a post-Homeric tradition, the Scales of Destiny for Zeus, which is exactly what Thoth does in the Weighing of the Heart of the deceased person before Osiris. Each of them has also been credited with the invention of writing.

He need not have bought his sandals at the same shop as his *petasos* or Panama hat. As soon as we lay aside the prejudice in favour of an initial unity in this singularly diverse deity, we begin to see a direction in which a partial solution may be reached ; for it is quite certain that there is some connection between Hermes the god, and those stone pillars or *herms*, which were used as way-marks or boundary-stones in Greek lands. We begin, then, by saying that Hermes is a *herm*. At this point I must stop and refer to something said on the subject by my friend Jane Harrison, whose recent removal we deplore, as those who knew her best deplore the most. In a tiny booklet, which must be one of the very last of her writings, entitled *Myths of Greece and Rome*,[1] she expresses herself as follows on the origin of Hermes :

> P. 49. "This goodly young messenger, with the winged sandals and the golden wand, in what form was he actually worshipped ? The answer comes as a distinct shock. He was worshipped as a herm—that is, as a rude block or post, surmounted by a head. Pausanias, when he came to Pharae in Achaia, saw an image of Hermes Agoraios (He of the Market).
>
> 'It was of square shape, surmounted by a head with a beard. It was of no great size. In front of it was a hearth made of stone with bronze lamps clamped to it with lead. Beside it an oracle is established. He who would consult the oracle comes at evening, burns incense on the hearth, lights the lamps, lays a coin of the country on the altar to the right of the image, and whispers his question into the ear of the god. Then he stops his ears and quits the market-place, and when he is gone outside a little way, he uncovers his ears, and whatever word he hears that he takes for an oracle.'
>
> "Not only Hermes, but it would seem many of the other gods began their ritual life as *hermae*."

That is the way that Miss Harrison introduces the subject. Like ourselves, she treats the equation of Hermes and herm as fundamental. Even in this statement we are not quite at the beginning of the matter ; for the herm itself has developed out of a simpler form. Originally there was no head ; it has been humanised ; sometimes it has even

[1] Benn's Sixpenny Library, No. 59.

been made virile by the addition of another human symbol. So we go back to the simpler form that underlies these rude evolutions, and say that *Hermes is either a pillar or a post:* and since the post is in natural order the ancestor of the stone pillar, we suggest that Hermes was originally a wooden post. Shorn of his attributes, there he stands, without shoes or wand, or a head and *a fortiori* without a hat; it looks very unkind to reduce a god to such narrow dimensions; it is worse than making Apollo into an Apple! The comparison, however, may be helpful; for it suggests that Hermes also may have a vegetable ancestry. Let us see if we are getting nearer to the correct point of view.

At Olympia we make the goal of a pilgrimage the masterpiece of Praxiteles, Hermes carrying the infant Bacchus. This is far enough removed from a vulgar herm, but we notice that there is a round tree-stem in the sculpture, which serves as a support to the arm of the god. That may be only a sculptor's necessity. It is, however, no artist's exigency that makes Hermes carry the infant Bacchus. That is a part of the fundamental myth. How does one god carry another in this lovely attitude? The statue is broken, but it looks as if the missing part of the arm of Hermes were holding something that the babe Dionysos is stretching out its hands for. Shall we say 'a bunch of grapes'? That will suit the smaller god admirably, for he is vine-god and originally ivy-god. What connection can there be between ivy or vine and a stump of a tree? The answer is obvious; Hermes the Kourotrophos or Boy's Nurse is the tree-stump around which ivy clings or on which the vine is trained. In the case of the Hermes of Praxiteles, the design of the sculptor suggests a vine growing upon the stump of a tree, either a tree that is a natural growth, or a post that has been made out of a tree by the simple process of lopping the trunk. We can see the same idea in the accompanying representation of the so-called Silenus in the Vatican Museum, which is closely related to the Hermes of Praxiteles.

We may confirm this statement by examining the actual herms which are attached to three of the greatest statues of the god. It will be noticed that in each case there is a tree-trunk for a support to the statue, not a squared pillar, and the tree-trunk has had its lower limbs lopt away. In the case of Praxiteles' statue, the tree is not only lopt, but allowed to bifurcate, which is significant of the training of the ivy

or the vine upon the support, and betrays at the same time the origin of the virile element which we see in some of the squared and headed herms of antiquity. In the Hermes from Andros we have the additional feature of the embrace of the herm by a serpent; there may also be traces of this in the Farnese Hermes. The tree-trunk is to be grasped, but it is not clear why the vine or ivy should be turned into a serpent.

We shall take this as our mythological ground-form. Our next step in the investigation will be even more surprising than the detection of the antecedents of Praxiteles. We are going to find out what was the particular tree out of which this herm was made. If we were to follow Miss Harrison in the belief that a herm is not an unlikely antecedent for a god, we might make an oak stump the herm of Zeus, and leave the rest to Pheidias; or we might take the apple tree or the poplar, and call it Apollo. What shall we say of the special tree-life of the primitive Hermes? In order to answer this question we shall have to change our ground from Olympia to Italy.

Silenus (*c.* 350-300 B.C.) with infant Dionysos from the Vatican Museum.

In the middle of the second century after Christ there was a writer of Christian vision and of Christian parable in the Church of Rome, whose name was Hermas. There is no doubt he was of Greek origin, as well as named after the great Greek god, whom the Arcadians worshipped above all others. He had actually been sold away from his native land and his pagan surroundings along with a brother of his, to become merchandise in the Roman slave-market. Here he was purchased by a Roman lady, named Rhoda, and, to abbreviate the tale, both his mistress and himself, as well as his brother, found the Christ of the new faith; the brother, whose name

was Pius, became the chief pastor of the Roman Church, and Hermas, now a freed man, its chief literary ornament.[1] Hermas, for all his Roman dignity, carried with him a close and faithful remembrance of the mountains and valleys of Arcadia, and when he talked what he called *Similitudes* to the Roman congregation, it was not of Soracte that he talked, nor of the Apennines, but of the mountains in

Hermes of Praxiteles. Farnese Hermes. Hermes of Andros.

the Peloponnesus, whose names he had at his finger-tips, and worked into his parable, without anyone suspecting that when he said *Snowdon* or *Cader Idris*, he meant anything by the names. Hermas, then, talked *Similitudes* in Church, according to the ministry and method of the prophets, an order that was not extinct in his day : and

[1] For these and other related matters, see my "Hermas in Arcadia."

on an occasion when there was, if we like to imagine it so, a collection to be taken up for the poor saints, he chose as his theme the relations to one another of *the Vine and the Elm*. This time his parable was not Arcadian. He was talking from Campania, and to people who had no need to read between the lines of the *Similitude*, and ask where the prophet found it. *The Vines were growing on the Elms at their own doors*. So it was easy to explain that the Vine and the Elm were in a relation of mutual advantage ; one was the figure of the Poor man, and the other of the Rich man, one of whom depends on the benefactions, the other on the intercessions of his companion. Until recently it was, I believe, explained by the scholars that it was the Rich man who supported the Poor ; the Rich man was intended by the Elm, and the Poor man who clung to the Rich was the Vine that needed to be lifted from the dust by the branches above him. I had, however, occasion to show recently that this was not Hermas' meaning. For him it is the Rich man that trails by nature in the dust, and is lifted into fruitfulness and beauty by the intercession of the Poor.[1]

From the *Similitude* of Hermas we learn, then, that at Rome in his day it was the custom to train the Vine upon the Elm. *Hermes, then, is the Elm-tree*. When we make that equation we see a gleam in the direction of philology : for *Herm*, as we shall see presently, is the same word as *Elm*. In Latin and in the Romance languages we have the forms, *Ulmus* in Latin, *Orme* in French, *Urmo* in Italian, by the side of *Elm* in English.[2] We have resolved the philological perplexity over the meaning of the *Herm*. It has nothing to do with *Wind* or *Hurry*, as Fick supposed. It is not Greek, and it is a Northern word.[3]

[1] *Expository Times*, March, 1928.

[2] To which must be added the Teutonic and Scandinavian forms, Alm, Aelm, and Ilm. A perplexing congruence of all possible initial vowels.

[3] It may be asked whether this does not require that some kind of sanctity should attach to the elm, as it is known to do (for Zeus' sake), to the oak.

On this point we shall give further evidence, but it may be noted, in passing, that Sébillot, in his *Folk-lore de France* (iii, 424), gives statistics of trees venerated in the department of the Oise, in which the elm had the first place: the enumeration was seventy-four elms to twenty-seven oaks, with other trees in smaller number. That appears to be an enumeration, not a percentage.

The foregoing philological identification, of which something more presently, rules out of court the supposition of an original Greek Hermes, and *a fortiori*, of an Egyptian Hermes. The elm is not an Egyptian product. When Origen has occasion to quote the parable of Hermas on the Elm and the Vine, he explains that it is the tree *which they call* πτελέα (*pteléa*); it required an explanation. Equally discarded is the theory of a primitive Arcadian, or other Greek, origin. There is no sign, as far as I am aware, of a Greek correlate to *ulmus*. Hermes must be hyperborean to the Greeks, or at least, middle-European.

Now let us look again at the Vine and the Elm, from which we

Vines married to mulberries.

took our suggestion with regard to Hermes. A little reflection will show that it is not possible to train a vine over the conventional elm. Imagine a vine set to grow amongst the luxuriant foliage and towering branches of the Cambridge elms. It would be starved for lack of sunlight, and would, in Scripture language, "bring no fruit to perfection." The elm, to be of real use to the vine, must be a pollard elm, shorn of its natural exuberance. The suggestion is a startling one, when made for the first time, but it is easily brought into the domain of reality. Every traveller who crosses the plains of Lombardy, say from Milan to Venice, will pass through miles of vineyards, where the vines are tree-trained. True, the trees are not elms; they are mulberry trees, but not mulberry trees allowed to grow to nature's height or breadth. They are pollarded, and when the stem has reached a

certain height, the tree is allowed to bifurcate. Along this bifurcated stem the vine is trained, and, by means of connecting lines from tree to tree, has abundant scope for its own growth and fruitfulness. This is the kind of vine and this the sort of supporting tree that Hermas was thinking of, when he composed his parable. Look at the accompanying picture of a North Italian vineyard at the present day, and see if it does not deserve a place in the next edition of the *Shepherd of Hermas*.

Mulberry tree on which vines are trained in N. Italy. From the *Gelsicultura* of Professor C. Fuschini.

That is not all that the picture will teach us. It is very likely that in identifying Hermas with vegetable life, we have stumbled upon the origin of his mysterious caduceus or magic wand. It is one of the marks by which we know him in art, and describe him in literature, the wand with which he wakes the sleeper, and, if we may coin English to imitate Homeric terms, with which he *sleeps the waker;* that wand with which he closed the eyes of the watchful Argus, described by Pope at the close of the Dunciad,

> "As Argus' eyes, by Hermes' wand opprest,
> Closed one by one to everlasting rest."

There are plenty of magic wands to be detected in all literatures; Moses might lend his to Homer and his Hermes; Milton will borrow one from a similar quarter in order that the descending angel of Peace may wave it wide over both sea and land. This Hermes' wand, however, is not an ordinary staff, which any magician might wield; it is made up of curious convolutions; it is bifurcated, and the bifurcations are crossed one over the other. It is, in that regard, singularly like the tree stumps in an Italian vineyard. A very little modification will make the one into the other. It becomes his own emblem. Look at the enclosed picture of a mulberry tree from N. Italy. What we

need now is some evidence that there was magic value in the shoots of the elm tree. All would be clear, if it was, for example, a mountain ash, or rowan, or quicken tree ; for that tree is as full of magic as a tree can hold, and has been recognised as having such virtue down to our own time. I am not aware, however, of any special virtue residing in slips of elm, but we may find it presently on further enquiry.

One more speculation with regard to Hermes as the artists represent him. There is his hat, which the ancients call πέτασος (*pétasos*) or *broad-brim*. It was originally the hat of the shepherd and the field-worker, a protection against the sun and the rain, but especially the former. May we say that it is, in Hermes' case, a vine-dresser's hat ? The Kourotróphos is naturally the vine-dresser. In that case it can be classified along with the caduceus, and we shall be left with the sandals and their wings, whose origin must surely be sought elsewhere than in garden, field, or grove ; as must ever so many other peculiarities which constitute the Hermetic cycle.

All that we have attempted to do is to suggest, and we hope in part to prove or to make probable, that there is a vegetable element in the ancestry of Hermes, as there is in so many other of the Olympians ; that this element is hyperborean, as in the case of Apollo, and relates his cult to the vine, and to Dionysos, the personified vine, in the sense that a vine needs the support of either post or pillar for its effective growth : so we suggest the elm-tree as the direct ancestor, and that its name is actually latent in that of the god, who may also be regarded as the vine-dresser, standing to the elm as personified form, something in the same way as Zeus to the oak. It is hardly to be expected, as we said at the beginning of the enquiry, that a single origin will suffice for such a complex character and for such multifarious avocations as antiquity has assigned to Hermes.

Now for some verifications of the correctness of the foregoing investigation.

First of all, let us see if we have exhausted the message which Praxiteles and other artists have left us in the marble of Olympia and elsewhere. I have always taken for granted that the support against which Hermes is leaning was a mere sculptor's necessity, and not a part of the artist's vision. Almost anyone would have said the same, for the statue is viewed from the front, and there is in the Olympian statue, an obvious connecting bar to keep the god and his precious

burden from falling. Suppose, however, we look as we attempted to do on a previous page, at the statue from the rear, so escaping from the folds of the drapery of Hermes which conceal the herm against which he is leaning, we shall see that it is not a squared post at all, but an actual tree trunk, whose head has been lopt off, as well as the lower branches, while portions of the bark at the root have been stript from the trunk. Not only so, but there is suspicion of a vine, or other creeper (for which the snake in the Andros herm is an equivalent), growing up the stem of the herm. Thus the sculptors have actually given us Hermes the Vine-bearer in two forms, first the elementary form as it occurred at every agriculturist's door ; second, the same Hermes, as sublimated by the imagination and the emotion of a great artist.

In the next place, we have to enquire whether there is anything intended by Praxiteles in representing the elm-tree or herm as stript of its lower bark. At this point I have had the advantage of a communication from my friend Donald Mackenzie, whom I consulted on the subject of the *Folk-lore of the Elm.* Without any suspicion on the part of either of us that the enquiry was likely to lead anywhere, he wrote me as follows :—

> DEAR DR. RENDEL HARRIS,
>
> Your letter has come round to me here. Enclosed are some notes on the elm, which I hope may be useful. . . . In the county of Ross and Cromarty (my native county) women used elm-bark for a hair-wash. The bark of young elms is said to be the best. Landlords complained in the old days that young elm trees were stripped of their bark by women so that they might have glossy heads of hair. The women had superstitious notions about the elm, but what they were cannot now be discovered. It was supposed to protect one against evil (supernatural) influences, like the elder which it was unlucky to burn. . . .
>
> Yours faithfully,
>
> DONALD A. MACKENZIE.

It seems that the valuable contribution, which I here abbreviate, not only explains why the bark is stript from the base of Praxiteles' herm, but it clears up in part the difficulty which I expressed above as to the existence of magic virtue in the elm. It is clear that in Mr.

Mackenzie's county the elm was as magical as the rowan-tree. One particular variety is actually known as the witch-elm.

It was pointed out by us in what precedes that one of the early forms of Hermetic cult was divination ; Pausanias tells us of a herm-oracle to which an enquiry was whispered, and the answer came in the first words heard after leaving the oracle. We need not doubt that such forms of enquiry were common in the Pagan world, and that Hermes was the patron of them. He would, in that case, have been the St. Anthony of Padua of Paganism, for it is precisely this rôle of answering questions, such as relate to lost property, and replying to letters, such as, for instance, relate to lost affections, that belongs to the most popular saint of the modern Roman Church. We need not assume that the cult of St. Anthony is a modern invention. It probably always existed in the Pagan world, from which it easily passed over into, or was retained in the Christian Church. We get a glimpse of this in the eleventh Mandate of Hermas, where that early Christian writer distinguishes between the false prophets of his own day in the Church, and the truly-inspired prophet. The double-minded people come to the false prophet, *as to a soothsayer, and ask him what is going to happen to them.* They practise soothsaying, *like the Gentiles*, says Hermas. The false prophet is *consulted in retirement.* That is a sufficient description to enable us to verify one of the ways in which the World crept into the Church. Indeed we suspect, as in so many other cases, that these Mandates and Parables contain actual experiences of Hermas himself. His very name coincided so closely with that of Hermes, that he might easily have been invited to take people's luck for them ; at all events he comes down as heavily as he can on those who ask the Luck-Questions and those who give the Luck-Answers. It looks like a real page in the history of the Early Roman Church, just as it is a page in Hermas' own history when he talks of the Elm and the Vine and other agricultural occupations, like the use of the Squirt in the Vineyard. Divination includes the finding of Lost Property, and nothing was easier, when false prophets were about, than to turn the Church into a Lost Property Office ; but the divination of water and metals to which we shall refer, as being connected with the bifurcated divining rod, is something on a wider scale ; and I do not know of any actual evidence for including it in the Cult of Hermes. What we have

suggested under that head must be regarded as speculative criticism. Even if we are satisfied that Hermes is the Elm, we want further evidence for the magical uses of the Elm itself. Is there, for instance, a magical reason for burying people in coffins of elm-wood? That might bring Hermes to the strand, when souls have to migrate.

The problem upon which we are engaged, and of which we do not pretend to have reached a complete solution, involves difficulties on the philological as well as upon the archæological side. Even if we can satisfy ourselves that Hermes has a vegetable origin, and that the primitive herm was that useful creature, a wooden post or tree-trunk, such as the elm can afford to the ivy or the vine, we have still to explain how the name of the elm has such diverse vocalisation in different languages. If Hermes be equated with *elm*, as we have suggested, there is no difficulty in the exchange of *r* and *l*; but it is curious that while we write *Elm* the French should write *Orme* and the Italian *Urmo*, from the primitive *Ulmus*. Here the *o* vowel has precedence. How does *e* arise?

How can we connect Hermes and Ulmus? That is the question. And the answer becomes more difficult, when a suspicion is aroused that another tree, *viz.*, the alder (*alnus*) is related to the elm (*ulmus*), which brings a fresh competing *a* vowel on to the scene. The explanation lies in the following direction, as was suggested by Müller in his *Altitalisches Wörterbuch;* the ground-form from which these perplexing variations have arisen *had no vowel at all*. It was something like *l̥-mos*.[1] This ground-form has taken on various vocalisations among various peoples and to describe various trees. It is even suggested that we may connect Hermes with a lime-tree or a lemon-tree! However that may be, we see that the philological difficulty is removed from our equation. Hermes can be the elm, and if we find him carrying the ivy-god or vine-god, and observe the elm tree carrying vine or ivy, then the elm is Hermes and Hermes is the elm. This leads us to another consideration.

[1] Mr. Donald Mackenzie, to whom I referred above, points out to me that

> "The elm is in Scottish Gaelic called *leamhan*, in middle Irish *lem*. Dr. MacBain (*Etymological Dictionary of the Gaelic Lauguage*) derives from *l̥mo*."

The confirmation of our previous derivation is valuable. The vowels in the various elm-forms need not cause us any further anxiety.

We know that the vine is in Italy trained on the elm, but if our hypothesis is correct that Dionysos is ivy first and vine later, it might sound ridiculous to talk of the ivy *trained* on the elm. Evidently the ivy trains itself, which the vine does not. It goes on its own feet, while the vine has only its own fingers. *Then the vine has imitated the ivy, and been suggested by the ivy.* This causes us to reflect, that while the ivy requires no assistance to climb a tree, the vine will require some assistance. It has been acutely suggested by a young Cambridge scholar that this is the reason for the development of the phallic element in the herm, just as I have suggested that the bifurcation of the pollarded elm is also for the assistance of the climbing and spreading vine. Priapus is becoming respectable!

Now when we look at the statue of Hermes which has made Praxiteles immortal, the view of the figure from the rear discloses both elements, the phallic element and the bifurcation. The tree-trunk against which Hermes is leaning has *two* lopped branches starting from it towards him, one of which is definitely horizontal. We may imagine the primitive agriculturist driving a wooden spike into the trunk of his elm-tree in order to give the vine the assistance in climbing, which the ivy does not stand in need of.

In the statue at Olympia we have a reminder that Hermes, in carrying Dionysos, is supporting both the ivy and the vine. The latter because of the bunch of grapes that the infant god is stretching out his hands to grasp (for which we may compare the Pompeian parallel), and the former because there are marks in the hair of the god which suggest that he had originally attached to him a metal crown of ivy leaves.

Dr. A. B. Cook, to whom, as usual, I am indebted for illustrations and for criticisms, especially for the reference to the work of Müller quoted above, does not think that I can establish my suggestions that leaves were actually represented on the pillar against which the god is leaning, and that the bark of the tree has been peeled off at the base. He thinks it possible that the marks on the surface of the herm may be meant to represent the bark of a tree, but not any superimposed leafage. The lower part of the herm is due to restoration. I expect he is more right than I; if so, the theory of leafage, either vine or ivy, must be abandoned. It still seems to me that there has been an attempt to show that the bark has been interfered with. We need that suggestion in order to bring Hermes into the field of magic.

I should not like to contest with Dr. Cook over the reproduction of the herm of the Praxiteles statue, but I should prefer to draw attention to a more significant statue of Hermes, more significant, that is to say, for the student of origins. In the accompanying reproduction we have not only the Hermetic symbols, the cock, and the tortoise (out of whose shell he is going to make his first lyre), but we have also the herm in three stages of evolution, the tree, the pillar

Hermes with appropriate symbols.

and the man, the pillar carrying the ivy, and in its final form the vine. On looking closer at the tree-form, we see that it is not only pollarded, but that the bark has been dug into at various points, so as to extract the magical material after the fashion of the women in the North of Scotland in the last century. The story of Hermes is written very legibly across this beautiful work of art.

We have suggested already that if the elm has magical powers comparable to those of the rowan-tree, and if Hermes is the elm, we

may get a clue to the powers of divination possessed by the god. It is well known, for example, that it is *a forked stick* of the rowan-tree that is used by the water-finders and searchers after minerals, and it is *as a forked tree-trunk* that Hermes makes his appearance in the Vineyard. The caduceus, which is Hermes in action, is easily reduced to the forked stick or bifurcating tree. So the enquiry resolves itself into a question whether Hermes was ever thought of as a water "dowser" or metal finder.

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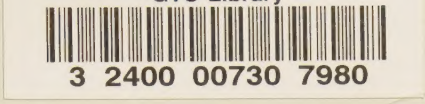

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